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Information received from the United Nations system**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

World Food Programme

Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat

Summary

The present follow-up report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) discusses the activities that FAO has been undertaking in the fields covered in the recommendations identified by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its fourth session.

Section I.A considers the activities undertaken pursuant to those recommendations directly addressed to FAO. The Seminar on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Right to Food was held in January 2006 and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security were adopted in November 2004.

Section I.B deals with the FAO activities related to those Forum recommendations that were not targeted only at FAO. These include activities like the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development conducted with the active participation of the Forum secretariat and indigenous peoples groups.

* E/C.19/2006/1.

** The present document was submitted late in order to ensure the inclusion of the most recent information.

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as well as activities like the Latin American regional consultation on the application and use of communication for development and indigenous peoples carried out in preparation for the First World Congress on Communication for Development.

Section II presents information provided by the World Food Programme and section III provides information submitted by the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat.

I. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

A. Activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) undertaken pursuant to those recommendations identified by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at its fourth session directly addressed to FAO

Traditional knowledge and indigenous agricultural systems

1. Traditional knowledge in agriculture and food security has become an important working area in the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Relevant activities are ongoing in the areas of gender, nutrition, integrated land management and biodiversity; FAO has reported on these activities to the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at earlier sessions. This report highlights some of the activities that have been carried out in 2005.

Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)

2. FAO, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), is undertaking an initiative aimed at the global recognition, conservation and sustainable management of the world's outstanding indigenous and traditional agricultural systems and their associated landscapes, biodiversity, knowledge systems and cultures. This inter-agency initiative has included in the full-stage project preparation, the collaboration of indigenous peoples professionals, and the comments expressed during the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, in December 2005, related to the need to include indigenous peoples in the selection of the Heritage Systems.

3. In order to provide systematic support for the conservation and adaptive management of Heritage Systems, the project strategy involves interventions at three levels. At the global level, the project will facilitate international recognition of the concept of Heritage Systems and consolidate and disseminate lessons learned and best practices from project activities at the pilot country level. At the national level in pilot countries, the project will ensure mainstreaming of the Heritage Systems concept in national sectoral and intersectoral plans and policies. At the site level in pilot countries, the project will address conservation and adaptive management at the community level. It is expected that the project will also contribute to sustainable development through (a) enhancing the benefits derived by local populations and indigenous peoples from the management, conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity and natural resources; (b) adding economic value and sharing derived benefits from these systems; and (c) enhancing food security and alleviating poverty. The project will be implemented in five pilot systems represented by 12 pilot sites in 7 countries, namely, Chile, China, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Peru and the Philippines.

4. Currently, the Heritage Systems are working in Chiloe Island, Chile, with the Huilliche community; in the Peruvian Andes with the Aymara and Quechua communities; in Ifugao, Philippines, with the Ifugao community; and in the Amasigh (Berber) oasis communities in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria.

World Food Day 2005

5. On 16 October of every year, the world celebrates World Food Day. A special theme related to food and agriculture is selected as the topic of the Day. FAO celebrated the 2005 World Food Day under the topic of "Agriculture and intercultural dialogue". "Cultures and agriculture" and "The contribution of civilizations to world agriculture" were the two subtopics. During World Food Day celebrations in all FAO member countries, the important contribution of indigenous peoples to food production and the sustainable management of agricultural ecosystems was highlighted. In his address at the official ceremony for the Day, the Director-General of FAO, Jacques Diouf, pointed out that "(A)griculture and intercultural dialogue, the theme of this year's World Food Day, recalls the contribution of different cultures to world agriculture and argues that sincere intercultural dialogue is a precondition for progress against hunger and environmental degradation". A specific round table on "Agricultures, our common heritage" with the participation of indigenous peoples was organized during the celebrations at FAO headquarters.

FAO strategy for working with indigenous peoples

6. Over recent years, indigenous peoples have increasingly gained a voice and attention in world development. International institutional frameworks have become increasingly aware of and targeted at indigenous groups and the broad range of issues affecting them. While FAO is part of this enabling environment and has a number of programmes and projects related to indigenous peoples, it does not have as yet a strategic plan and systematic support in this area. Accordingly, in 2005, the FAO Focal Points Network on Indigenous Issues and the Livelihoods Support Programme initiated an internal participatory process for the formulation of a framework towards the elaboration of an FAO policy and strategy on indigenous peoples. The rationale of the initiative was to promote a clearer understanding of indigenous peoples within FAO; to improve the knowledge on whether current priorities and approaches in natural resources, food, agriculture and other related working areas can adequately deal with the specific characteristics of indigenous peoples; and overall, to contribute to the development of an FAO policy and strategy for working with indigenous peoples. The formulation process was undertaken in collaboration with members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; it was of fundamental importance that the views of indigenous peoples be evident in this process. The draft document was discussed at a seminar/presentation at FAO in December 2005, with the participation of FAO staff, Forum members and staff of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Cultural indicators for identifying priorities on food security and rural development

Indigenous peoples indicators in the work of FAO

7. Indigenous cultures and their environments are inextricably linked. Unfortunately, indigenous peoples are disproportionately impacted by development activities that degrade or damage the environment and the ecosystems of which they are a part and that do not recognize or adequately consider the role that culture plays in sustainable development. Indigenous peoples are currently struggling in all

regions of the world to cope with the alarmingly rapid loss of their cultures, landscapes and agricultural biodiversity. Unsustainable development is also taking its toll on the integrity of their food systems and on food availability.

8. Through the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Initiative, a multi-stakeholder undertaking designed to support the transition to people-centred sustainable agriculture and rural development and to strengthen participation in programme and policy development, FAO is helping to build the capacity of rural communities and local organizations and to strengthen the impacts of good practices on policy in various countries. The Initiative focuses on the identification, assessment, sharing, replication and upscaling of good practices in sustainable agriculture and rural development, and the enhancement of communication and participation in policy processes affecting Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development.

9. Building on the work on cultural indicators initiated in 2002 in collaboration with the International Indian Treaty Council, the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative is supporting indigenous peoples organizations in developing a clearer and more empirical understanding of the relationship between culture and sustainable agriculture and rural development. In particular, it is working with the Council to develop a state-of-the-art paper on the role of culture in Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development focusing on indigenous peoples and their communities, cultural dimensions of agricultural and food systems, and the role played by culture in fostering sustainable livelihoods and in generating indigenous concepts of poverty and well-being. This document will also draw from the work of the Forum and United Nations organizations related to culture, poverty and indicators relevant to indigenous peoples' perspectives. Pending availability of funding, two parallel processes are envisaged for ensuring both indigenous peoples' and United Nations organizations' participation in the development of, and contributions to, the paper and for addressing the concerns raised by the paper through the work of these organizations.

10. By providing a strong empirical understanding of the relationship between indigenous cultures and Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development, this work is expected to strengthen indigenous peoples' efforts to influence policies and development programmes that affect their traditional food and agricultural systems. It is also expected to identify some practical entry points, tools and indicators that can be used to foster more culturally appropriate agriculture and rural development interventions.

FAO and the rights-based approach in relation to indigenous peoples

Seminar on Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Right to Food, and the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security

11. In November 2004, the 127th session of the FAO Council unanimously adopted the Voluntary Guidelines to support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security.

12. The innovativeness of the Voluntary Guidelines lies in their moving beyond the debate over the normative content of the right to food, to the more practical discussion of implementation. Operational in nature, the Voluntary Guidelines are a practical tool for States undertaking to orient policies and measures, as well as an advocacy tool for all stakeholders wishing to encourage better safeguarding of the right to food at the national level. The Guidelines cover a wide range of actions to be considered by Governments in order to create and secure an enabling environment for all, where people can feed themselves in dignity, and to establish safety nets for those who are unable to do so for reasons beyond their control.

13. Crucial in this regard is the problem of securing access to productive resources for all individuals and groups. Fighting hunger and malnutrition requires tackling the problems of discrimination and marginalization faced by many groups that are politically or geographically marginalized and live in relatively remote areas. In this regard, Guideline 8.1 states: "States should respect and protect the rights of individuals with respect to resources such as land, water, forests, fisheries, and livestock without any discrimination ... Special attention may be given to groups such as pastoralists and indigenous people and their relation to natural resources." Empowerment and participation are stressed in the Voluntary Guidelines as key elements of a rights-based approach, and people's capacity building is indicated as one way to enhance them. In the case of indigenous peoples, the problem of hunger (an already critical issue) overlaps with that of discrimination. Recent developments in the areas of both indigenous issues and the right to food have suggested a joint approach with respect to the two areas, and renewed attention to themes that are becoming dominant in the human rights agenda. As part of the Voluntary Guidelines-related activities, a seminar was organized in January 2006 on "Indigenous Peoples' Rights and the Right to Food". The objective of the seminar was to create awareness among FAO staff of the situation of indigenous peoples, the right to food and the related United Nations legal frameworks that protect such rights. The seminar presentation dealt with: the importance of a rights-based approach; a brief overview of existing mechanisms protecting indigenous peoples rights in human rights law (treaty and non-treaty mechanisms); the individual/collective dimension of indigenous rights; the extent to which indigenous groups are able to enjoy their fundamental human right of access to food; and new strategies for the implementation of indigenous rights and the right to food, with particular attention to capturing synergies between different mechanisms available at both the international level (crucial problem of coordination between agencies) and the national level.[1]

[1] The seminar presentation was addressed by Professor Joshua Castellino who is an expert on indigenous peoples' rights. He is currently teaching and is Acting Director of the Master of Laws programme in International Peace Support Operations at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, Galway.

B. Other FAO activities related to the recommendations identified by the Forum at its fourth session that were not targeted only at FAO

Indigenous peoples in rural development and agrarian reform

FAO International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development

14. FAO has been convinced of the importance of bringing back into the development agenda the commitment towards agrarian reform and rural development, and the identification of new challenges and options for revitalizing rural communities. This is fundamental if the goal of halving the number of poor and hungry people by 2015, as set out in the Millennium Development Goals, is to be achieved.

15. Accordingly, and in order to renew such a commitment from all actors in the development arena — government institutions, civil society organizations, the private sector and United Nations and intergovernmental development organizations — FAO and the Government of Brazil organized the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from 7 to 10 March 2006. The meeting offered an important opportunity to review different experiences of agrarian reform and rural development around the world by analysing impacts, processes, mechanisms and the role of the actors involved with a view to developing proposals for future action.

16. Five themes were discussed during the meeting:

- Policies and practices for securing and improving access to land and promoting agrarian reform
- Building local capacities to improve access to land, water, agricultural inputs and agrarian services so as to promote rural development and a sustainable management of natural resources
- New opportunities to strengthen rural producers and communities
- Agrarian reform, social justice and sustainable development
- Food sovereignty and access to resources

17. For each theme, an issue paper was prepared and discussed through a participatory process of consultations, including electronic conferences. The issue papers were presented at the four-day Conference, during which representatives from Governments and civil society organizations worked at group thematic sessions to identify jointly the main topics for inclusion in the plan of action.

18. The Conference was joined by several indigenous peoples groups. Together with six other constituencies of civil society, indigenous peoples were represented in a panel session on agrarian reform and food sovereignty "on equal footing" with government representatives. An indigenous person was selected by the Civil Society Forum "Land, Territory and Dignity" to present in the plenary the Forum's outcomes and declaration. The secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues organized a special thematic session during the Conference on "Indigenous peoples and their right to land, territories and resources: synergies and tensions with agrarian reform and rural development". The session discussions, which focused on the challenges confronted in promoting and reaching the Millennium Development

Goals through agrarian reform and rural development within the indigenous peoples' perspective, provided important inputs for the Final Declaration adopted by the Conference.

19. As indicated in the Conference Declaration, indigenous peoples' organizations as well as other civil society organizations and United Nations organizations dealing with food sovereignty, food security, agrarian reform and rural development will continue to participate in the process of implementation of the Conference Principles. This will include enhanced participation in FAO technical committees, such as the Committee on World Food Security and the Committee on Agriculture, as well as in other mechanisms designed to institutionalize social dialogue, cooperation, monitoring and evaluation of progress in agrarian reform and rural development.

Indigenous peoples and communication

Communication systems for indigenous peoples at local level

20. FAO has been involved for several decades in the development of communication systems that are geared to and managed by rural people. Through participatory and multimedia approaches, these systems promote the sharing of knowledge and information among rural groups, including indigenous peoples. They support rural and indigenous people in exchanging experiences and knowledge and in finding common ground for collaboration and management of agricultural and rural development activities. According to the FAO approach, no longer is rural communication to be understood as entailing a top-down transfer of messages, but rather as encompassing the use of new information and communication technologies, blended with local and indigenous sources of information and practices, thorough participation and multimedia approaches.

21. As a preparation for the First World Congress on Communication for Development that will be held in Rome in September 2006, FAO is organizing a Latin American regional consultation on the application and use of communication for development and indigenous peoples. The main objective of this regional consultation is to discuss the value of communication for rural development and its inclusion in indigenous peoples-related policies and programmes. The outcomes of the consultation will be inputs into the topics and agenda dealing with communication and indigenous peoples to be considered during the World Congress.

II. Contribution from the World Food Programme (WFP)

22. The World Food Programme (WFP) has provided relevant information, as requested, to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, on its best practices in promoting and protecting the human rights of indigenous people.

23. In response to recommendation 22, as contained in the report of the Forum on its fourth session,[2] WFP reiterates its mission, which is to provide access to food to hungry men, women and children in situations of acute and chronic food insecurity, and to distribute food impartially to the most vulnerable, based on needs. As noted in the preamble of the recommendations, in many contexts, being a member of an indigenous group results in a specific kind of vulnerability, including disparities in power including economic and social power.

24. In recognition of such vulnerability, the WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping Programme (VAM) includes the consideration of data disaggregated by ethnic group and sex, for example, in a case study in Bolivia in support of the project to mainstream gender into vulnerability analysis and mapping, it was found that there was a correlation between the main spoken language and the level of poverty: households speaking indigenous languages were poorer than Spanish-speaking households. In accordance with the recommendation at issue, WFP makes the collection of data on indigenous women, whenever relevant, an integral part of its programme design.

25. Economic and social disparities, like those related to gender, can evidence discrimination against members of indigenous groups and hinder their ability to achieve economic autonomy, and to contribute like members of other groups to the sustainable livelihoods of their families and communities. This can impose high social and economic costs on individuals, households and societies, impeding their advancement. Such disparities also adversely affect the effectiveness of humanitarian and development assistance interventions. To redress these disparities, WFP strives towards equality and the empowerment of women as effective means of combating hunger and eradicating poverty. Indeed, under the Gender Policy 2003-2007, WFP Country Offices must dialogue with host Governments to urge that the sociocultural, economic, political and legal environments be conducive to the advancement of women and gender equality.

26. In the case of the Niger, it was not possible to provide a description of the situation of women broken down by ethnic groups. WFP also takes into account the factor of sensitivity in collecting information on ethnic groups, especially in the politically charged circumstances of countries like Rwanda. In such cases, the Programme needs to ensure that it does not fuel an already volatile situation.

III. Contribution from the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat

27. The Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat aims to assist in promoting the Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. Current plans include a full-colour poster, based on a work by an indigenous artist, which will promote the Decade and is scheduled to be printed in time for the fifth session of the Forum. Officers from the Department are consulting with the Forum secretariat and indigenous musicians on arrangements for a full-scale live music performance, to be held during the session. The Department has also designed

[2] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 23* (E/2005/43), chap. I, sect. B.

and printed a multi-coloured brochure with a distinctive typeface that informs indigenous youth about the Forum and the new (Second) Decade and provides contact points for their further involvement.

28. Following past practice, the Department intends to draft, design and distribute a press kit to support promotion of this year's session of the Forum, and to organize press conferences or other media events as appropriate. United Nations information centres in countries with significant indigenous populations will be asked to undertake supportive outreach campaigns. If additional resources were provided for such efforts, more promotional activities could be undertaken, both at Headquarters and in the field.